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THE BOSTON TRANSCRIPT
1931

VERSES

by

WILLIAM BACON SCOFIELD

PRIVATELY PRINTED
WORCESTER · MASSACHUSETTS
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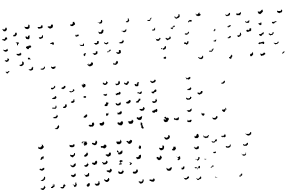

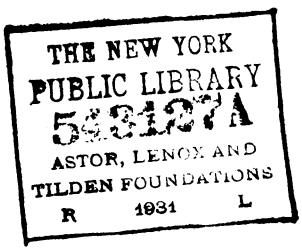

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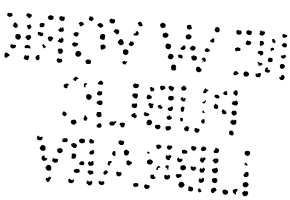

The Commonwealth Press
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Worcester, Massachusetts

Heartman 15 May 1931

TO MY MOTHER

Why say the story's nearly told?
Your voice rings ever young!
How can the heart be growing old,
That thrills with songs unsung?

Your life, serene, has taught this truth,
And made the lesson clear,
That age may seem almost like youth,
To those who have no fear.

INTRODUCTION

THESE POEMS, MOST OF WHICH WERE WRITTEN DURING THE LAST MONTH OF 1913 AND THE FIRST MONTH OF 1914, HAVE BEEN COLLECTED AND PRINTED TO PLEASE MY MOTHER TO WHOM THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED.

THE PHOTOGRAVURES, WHICH ARE INCLUDED, ARE FROM PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE ORIGINAL CLAY MODELS MADE DURING THAT TIME.

THEY SHOW THE FIRST WORK OF THIS KIND I HAVE EVER ATTEMPTED, AND I PRESENT THEM HERE OWING TO THE KINDLY ENCOURAGEMENT I HAVE RECEIVED FROM AMERICA'S WORLD-FAMED SCULPTOR GUTZON BORGLUM.

W. B. SCOFIELD

Worcester, Massachusetts
February 8, 1914

SALUTATION

Each blade of grass, however small,
Each vine upon your garden wall,
  Its course still upward turns;
And, after countless years of night,
The sleeping rocks shall see the light
  That on God's altar burns.

The Roman gladiators' cry
Was, "We who are about to die
  Salute you." Oh! not so
Shall we the final message give,
But, "We who are *about to live*
  Salute you," as we go.

IN HIS HOUSE

In my Father's house, He told us,
Are many mansions fair;
My time has come, I go my way
Your welcome to prepare.
There shall be place for every one,
The poor, the old, the blind,
The sick, the lame, the shaken soul
Shall lodging surely find.

For there, the shackles of the slave
I crumple in my hand;
The scarlet woman's tresses
Shall be smoothed—yea, every strand.
The slave? He bore your lash and scorn,
As I, myself, have borne,
The harlot dragged your cross of sin
On which my hands were torn.

God's messengers ride forth to do
His sure and great commands.
He holds the creatures of His will
In the hollows of His hands.

That king shall lay his sceptre down,
  Who faltered in his trust,
Some beggar win a kingly crown,
  His head bowed in the dust.

For God has made, and keeps, this law,
  When mortal life is past:
The last, among you, shall be first,
  The first shall, then, be last.

AS A MAN SOWETH

Rebellious, as a proud and fallen angel,
The Emperor sat within his lonely room,
And, from his window, looked out o'er the island
Which seemed, to him, naught but a living tomb
The sun was sinking in the grieving ocean,
Its daily glory ended—night was near—
Above the roar of breakers, pounding shoreward,
From far at sea, a summons reached his ear.
A voice sonorous, mighty as the storm wind,
Which scatters ships, as sowers scatter seed;
Three times it echoed through the rock bound island
"Napoleon, the Emperor, give heed!"

When gallant troopers to red carnage gallop,
No call, like this, comes rolling o'er the field,
Nor yet, when France's eagles preen their plumage,
When conquered foemen's doom in blood is sealed;
Nor when proud Paris, in mad mood exultant,
Acclaimed his glory to the stars on high;
A sterner note rang through that startling summons,
Swelling the anguish of that clamorous cry.
It seemed the moaning of lost souls departed,
As if the world's great heart were torn in twain,
The sadness of all time was in its sorrow,
When it came booming o'er the shuddering main.

It summoned him to be a great commander
  In the dark world which closely touches ours,
To lead its mighty armies on to battle,
  Direct their movements, marshal all their powers.
Dire forces and all elemental evil!
  That country has, of them, the full control,
Who wields them must work evil upon evil
  Until the task revolts his tortured soul.
He may not choose, for he must do their bidding,
  Who wins a place among that lawless horde;
He sowed the wind, and he shall reap the tempest
  When he has crossed the black and treacherous ford.

Man shapes himself as blacksmith shapes the iron
  Which, molten, waits the hammer's sturdy stroke;
If shaped untrue, the watchful Master sees it
  And on His anvil man shall then be broke.
Work evil through your days on every planet,
  Do conscious wrong with sword, or word, or pen,
You shall be mustered in the mournful legions,
  And hear your sentence in the great Amen.

MORNING GLORIES

The Morning Glory, in rich robes
  Of purple and of white,
Welcomes within her royal tents
  The heralds of the light.

Exultingly she sees the Sun
  Ride forth upon his way,
And scatters perfumes on the air
  To greet the Lord of Day.

But when he mounts the upper sky,
  His great shield all ablaze,
The fragile flower faints and dies
  Beneath his ardent gaze.

For, all too late, the God of Fire
  His shield bedims in cloud;
The Morning Glory's brilliant robes
  Are her own winding shroud.

'Tis better so. She hailed the king,
  In Morn's fair armour drest,
How had she mourned had she but seen
  His red blood stain the West.

TOGETHER

You're fair, love, you're *my* love,
  Care rides like a feather;
If rain, then the rainbow,
  When we are together.

We're young, dear, we're strong, dear,
  Be our Fate dour or sweet;
Rugged hills are smooth plains
  To love's light wingéd feet.

We're old, dear, we're poor, dear.
  As stars in the night
Deep down in our hearts
  The old love-light is bright.

We're sad and we're lonely,
  The Fall days are cold;
Let my hand meet your hand
  'Till the story's all told.

THE NEWSBOY'S STORY*

His body was crippled and fragile,
The worst was his queer little back;
He looked like an old-fashioned pedlar
Who carried his goods in a pack.
His work—it was papers and lunches—
He sold at the station, and then,
He polished the shoes—for a nickel—
Of most of the travelling men.

He lived with his mother and sister,
His father had wandered away.
"We manage somehow," he once told me,
"For I make a dollar a day."
Just the same in summer and winter
As game as a game bantam bird,
No gloom on his pinched little features,
Complaint from him never was heard.

One day he was missing. They told me
He fell on the ice-coated track.
That was all—the wheels scarcely touched him—
'Twas enough—Jim never came back.
They took him straight home, but his mother
Was away and no one knew where;
The tenement rooms were all cheerless
The walls and the floors were so bare.

* Jim was a real boy and this story about him is founded on fact.

They sent for his dear little sister
And called in the doctor and priest,
To comfort his body and save him
Before his poor soul was released.
But Jim, he just seemed not to see them,
Didn't care what either one said,
But stretched out his weak little fingers
And drew the scared child to his bed.

"Oh, girlie, run down to the station
Tell the boss I am weak and in pain
And ask him to send *a real live one*
Aboard the big six o'clock train.
Don't forget to take care of mother
She means well you know, as a rule,
I'm sure she will mend your old jacket
So next week you can go to school.

Be good, for Jim wishes it, dearie,
And whether I'm here or away
Remember I'm trying to help you
As much as I can every day;
I'm sure it don't make any diff'rence,
If crippled or perfect and strong
If you only try hard as you *can* try
You'll square everything that seems wrong."

And then his brave mind seemed to wander,
"Look here! Take a straight tip from me,
I'll chuck up this ticket to heaven
Unless it will pass us all three."
Strong soul on your cross in weak body,
Fare forth on your ne'er ending quest!
The priest murmurs, bending above you,
"He chastens all those He loves best."

MUSIC

In weakness of our flesh we suffer so
When brutal pain twists all the fibres taut
And plays upon them with his fiddle bow,
We think the prize of life is dearly bought;
Forgetting that the Master best doth know
The tone, demanded of each quivering string,
And that both pæans proud and dirges low
In wondrous music to His heaven ring.

CAST IN ONE MOULD

Why should your features lean and face austere
  Grow, 'neath my unskilled fingers, in the clay;
Fingers agrope, like blind men in the sun,
  Uncertain if life stirs to greet the day?

'Til, suddenly, a hand is on them laid,
  A friendly voice comes, whispering, on the ear,
The blind, responsive to the touch and sound,
  May almost see the life of which they hear.

And I, adrowse, scarce saw you while I wrought,
  'Til, suddenly, a voice said, as you came,
"Behold *the god in man* of early days
  With will of iron and with heart of flame."

You, also, *beast in man*, my fingers made
  From out the self-same clay, of it a part.
Your visage, leering, shows your wayward will
  And all the passions of your lustful heart.

Cast in one mould from the first natal day,
  The two in one; the noble,—base in mind,—
The gift *and* curse! By whom were they bestowed
  Together, on the race of human kind?

FLOWERS OF THE GARDEN

O, the flowers of the garden,
How they bud, how they bloom,
  And dance in a wonderful way;
How they bow to the breeze,
How they nod at the trees,
  Like sweet little children at play.

O, the flowers of the garden,
How they smile at the sun,
  And laugh, when they're caught in the rain;
And when they are kissed
By the mischievous mist,
  They hold up their faces again.

Bright flowers of my garden,
How you droopt in the heat,
  And fell, at the winter's first blast;
Yet, you gave all you had
That my heart might be glad—
  And I know you, for angels, at last.

JOHN THE ORANGE MAN*

Ye gentlemen from Harvard,
  Who sit at home at ease,
Who have your wives and babies
  A'clustering round your knees;
For whom the gates of Fortune
  Swing wide as e'er they can,
Ye think no more, I fear me,
  Of John, the orange man.

But he, who since the old days,
  Has fought for place or pelf;
Has won no home, no gold, no wife,
  And scarcely keeps himself;
Has been a leader only
  In Disappointment's van—
His thoughts, I fancy, ofttimes turn
  To John, the orange man.

Oh, when your 'poco' wouldn't bid
  For ancient hats or hose,
When 'goody' from a favorite bust
  Had wrenched its honored nose;
When in your lonely chamber
  The spark of hope you'd fan,
'Twould blaze up bright at "How now frind?"
  From John, the orange man.

* Written for the Decennial Dinner of the Class of '87 Harvard.

John's fruit was yours, an' if you could
  Or could not raise the wind,
He'd trust you for a dozen
  And say, "No matter frind."
The all you need, to-day, is trust,
  To make some great scheme pan;
But do you meet the friendly faith
  Of John, the orange man?

Oh I have seen him caper,
  Like a fakir in a fit,
Whene'er a Harvard batsman
  Made a solid three-base hit,
And I have seen his apples roll,
  Unheeded, on the field
When the crimson nine or 'leven,
  At last, were forced to yield.

His lungs were never very strong,
  His thorax out of gear,
But his feeble shout of "Herverd!"
  Was worth a mighty cheer.
He was loyal to the marrow,
  Chock-full of hope and vim,
His very whiskers crimson,—
  That's why they grew on him.

So, gentlemen from Harvard,
  Who sit at home at ease,
Ye all may read the moral
  In the story if ye please;
And whatever fate betide us,
  Let us strive as best we can,
To keep the strong and simple faith
  Of John, the orange man.

TO-DAY

I have no time but the Present,
  I know neither Future nor Past,
The God of Now has claimed me
  And I serve him to the last.
Forgotten is Yesterday's battle,
  To-morrow's I win—if I may—
With foot firm in the stirrup,
  I ride in the great To-day.

"MAN WANTS BUT LITTLE"

I have a coat, a rough old coat,
I'll change it for no other;
No brand new coat can take its place
Though like it as twin brother.
It sets across the shoulders fine,
'Tis warm in any weather,
I'll never part from my old coat
If it only holds together.

I have a chair, an old, old chair
And in it I feel cozy;
I light my pipe and tilt me back—
The world looks right and rosy.
Of course some chairs must cost a heap,
Built more for show than wear,
And you may have 'em every one,
I'll keep my good old chair.

I have a home, a simple home,
It suits my taste completely;
We keep no maid, and yet, the wife
She runs it mighty neatly.
I've heard of homes like palaces,
Of Greece and ancient Rome,
I guess they're kind o' lonesome like,
Not like my own old home.

THE JESTER

Life is no king, a mere pretender he,
  Not even royal bastard, but a clown
Whose smiles are painted—as you all may see—
  His garb is motley, tinsel is his crown.

Yet he beguiles us 'neath the mighty tent
  Formed by the dome of softly swaying skies;
Our ears unto his foolish jests are lent
  And all his hackneyed tricks delight our eyes.

The clown is master of the world-ring show,
  He cracks his whip, we throng the sawdust stage;
Led by the knave, we through his antics go,
  Flushed by his praise and pallid at his rage.

When we have jumped through all his paper hoops,
  Essayed each feat he bade us to attempt,
He turns upon his foolish, doting dupes
  And looks us over in his cool contempt.

The games are ended! Life has struck his tents.
  The failing lights are flickering farewell;
The sullen music sounds its sad laments—
  Where is the Jester gone? Ah, who shall tell!

THE BUMBLE-BEE

In the Fairy's garden
  All kinds of flowers grow,
Bright and sweet and beautiful
  A'standing row on row;
And among them always,
  A'winging here and there,
Wheel the busy bumble-bees,
  The bandits of the air.

All those hustling honeybees
  Fly from flower to flower,
Stealing sweets from every one
  Flirting hour by hour.
Once a little lily looked
  On a wayward bee
"Stop," she cried, "your willful flight
  Or never visit me."

All for answer glanced his wings,
  As buzzed the wicked bee,
"I will go where'er I please,
  You cannot fly," said he.
So the lovely lily wept
  And struggled to be free,
To follow in the circling path
  Of that audacious bee.

The Fairy of the garden
  Saw her weep and heard her sigh;
"Oh, weep no more," she whispered,
  "But become a butterfly."
The white and gleaming petals changed
  To brilliant quivering wings,
No longer to a homely stalk
  The little lily clings;

For, poised upon a sunbeam,
  She was wafted here and there,
And saw all kinds of butterflies
  Like jewelled leaves in air.
And once—she saw that dusty bee,
  And thought as she sailed by,
"Of humble bees you were the best,
  But—you're no butterfly!"

THE TREE AND THE LEAVES

With foliage of tender green
A stately maple tree did screen
  Its life-stirred limbs in Spring;
The breeze, a wanton fickle elf,
Wooing the young leaves to himself,
  Amongst them e'er did sing.

The Summer passed, the Autumn came,
When leaves in brilliant colors flame;
  The tree was proud and glad.
With the Autumn fade her treasures,
Sings the wind in harsher measures,
  The mother tree is sad.

The wild wind waved his frosty rood,
Forgotten was the gentler mood
  In which he wooed before.
He smote the tree with wintry blast
And every dying leaf, at last,
  From its frail hold he tore.

Or else, he howled in mocking tone
"Why do you toss your arms and moan?
  Another Spring comes soon,
When other leaves, as fair and bright,
Shall make you beauteous to the sight;
  Why do you sigh and croon?"

The mournful maple, in despair,
But tossed her branches dry and bare,
  No answer made she then.
Though other leaves might come, she knew
The sere, dead leaves that her roots strew,
  Could never live again.

It is not so. Some far off Spring,
Those changed and living leaves, shall bring
  When they to birds have grown;
Unrecognized, by you and me,
They all shall visit that old tree
  And shall, by her, be known.

THE RIDDLE OF RIDDLES

When Dinosaurus walked the earth
  In prehistoric time,
He found vile microbes in his food
  Whether 'twas shale or slime.
Whether he Fletcherized or not
  They passed right down the line
To his great inner caverns, where
  They found the living fine.

The better they enjoyed themselves
  The worse he seemed to feel.
Old Doctor Mastodon came in
  And ordered with each meal
A ton of boulders, pulverized,
  And some salt ocean drink;
And, though the boulders made him bold,
  He weaker grew, I think.

The bugs all blessed him, as a god,
  Called him their Universe;
He laid him down upon the sod
  And signalled for the hearse.
Their wretched, small activities
  Had spoiled their own, snug nest,
They perished, with their universe,
  And laid them down to rest.

Then prehistoric man stept forth,
And other bugs got him;
He scratched the old earth's face with force,
The bugs, in turn, showed vim.
He ate, whatever came his way,
And this is likewise true,
The more he ate, the more the bugs,
Complacently, would chew.

He passed along, and modern man
Took up the sorry fight;
He eats and drinks and vaunts his strength,
The bugs in him delight.
They have their armies warring o'er
Each organ in his frame,
They tussle for his marrowbone
Without remorse or shame.

Their parliaments, within his form,
Enact this law and that;
And small microbic magnates, too,
On privilege grow fat.
And clubs are formed, and social cliques,
And royalties a few;
All that the man himself has done,
These microbes also do.

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Their navies sail within his veins,
  And explorations start
From out their great metropolis
  We call the human heart.
His body is their world, and yet,
  Some microbe savants hold
His mighty bulk, itself, is ruled
  By One, outside, untold.

In college lectures they declare,
  'Though grateful still for food,
Some other than the man himself
  Is their great primal Good.
And, while the feast and talk runs on,
  This much is plain and true,
Whatever gods we have and hold,
  Th' unbroken law is, "chew."

We are, ourselves, but microbes small
  Vexing our own great world,
And on its suffering bosom
  Our banners are unfurled.
We send our navies through *her* veins
  We break her rock ribs through;
Whatever we have done to her
  The earth, herself, will do.

For she, herself, a microbe dwells
  In some vague, monstrous shape;
She mimics its great attributes
  As bugs, and men, do ape—
It's all a box within a box,
  All just alike as peas,
The only difference seems to be
  Those bigger are than these.

At last, the poor old earth will die,
  Killed by her parasites;
A'wearying of the struggle
  To get her woman's rights.
Poor suffragette, quite, quite worn out,
  With you all humans perish,
But you, pale planet, well embalmed,
  Your form some one will cherish;

A lifeless moon, but sterilized,
  At last a harmless organ
And, worthily, a portion of
  Some vast celestial Morgan.

WHENCE CAME YOU?

From what fair Paradise you came
  Unto this lowly earth,
From what far heights you stept you down
  To this poor mortal birth,
We know not, and perchance e'en you,
  Yourself, can scarce recall
More, than a fragment, of the scenes
  Within that garden's wall.

Yet, one late day, as you looked forth
  And saw this whirling star,
Whose feeble light reached your clear eyes,
  A signal, from afar,
You bent your queenly head and heard
  Our lamentations rise;
You stayed you not but sought us out
  In woman's sweet disguise.

And well we know that in your soul
  Shines, steadfast, your white star,
Unlike the lurid fires of earth
  That sear, and leave a scar.

Wrought by W. B. Scofield

FOR THE WORK'S SAKE

The "nigger laster"* closely mimics man,
Or certain motions that a man may make;
And it is called, in slurring fashion, so
Because a Negro, toiling after hours,
When his day's work was over in the shop,
Sat nightly in his dimly lighted room
And from waste bits of wood the model wrought.
And when the sacrificial task was done,
The shoe-shops of the world accepted it
To last their shoes, and he, soon after, died
A victim to disease, which all along,
Had made his lonely labor seem so hard.

Had I the spark divine 'twould be my task
To set on canvas clear this dark skinned man,
Or mould his likeness in enduring bronze,
Or sing some song that should rehearse the deed;
Not to give him the mocking martyr crown
Of great achievement, painfully upflung,
Not that his name might take its rightful place
Among earth's greatest ones—but just for this—

* This name is given to a lasting machine used in shoe factories. The inventor of it is said to have been a negro or half-breed

That the deed's self might never quite be lost,
Its lesson all unlearned by all mankind.
Black, friendless, lonely, sick and undismayed
A nameless benefactor passed this way.

Oh you, who waste a ballad strangely sweet
To your young mistress and her flirting fan;
And you, whose futile brush, in flattery,
Sir Pompous' painted features still portrays;
E'en you who glibly prate of Heaven and Hell
And you who serve the state to serve yourselves,
Seek useful labor for your brush and pen;
Show us those men—the lesser Christs—who all
Wrought miracles with brain and hand as He
Who walked, and worked, and died, a man with men;
Then leave to God, or Fate, or what you please,
Those other problems which must follow these.

THE MEETING

OCTOBER 22, 1914

What went ye out to see?
Kaiser, and Czar and King,
Whom do ye seek;
Through pathways of the slain
Shall Christ return to reign—
Jesus, the meek?

If you should find Him there,
Pacing some battlefield,
What would you say;
Or, if brought face to face,
How shall ye find the grace
Shaméd to pray?

If He should look at you,
Gazing your soul into,
Where would ye hide;
Under great stacks of dead
Cover your royal head,
Or how abide?

If He should speak to you,
Saying, "Thou lovest Me?"
What answer give;
"If so, then feed My sheep!"
Could ye find tears to weep,
Courage to live?

If He stretched forth His hands,
Once more forgiving you,
Wouldst take and hold;
Or, when the cross-scars seen,
Wouldst cry: "I am unclean:
My soul is sold?"

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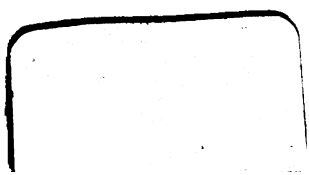
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